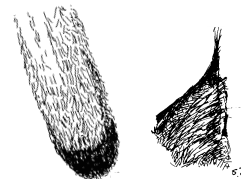


Bobcat tail & ear

Nature's Call

An Activity Newsletter for Kids by Utah's Project WILD--Winter 1998



Feline Facts and Cool Cats

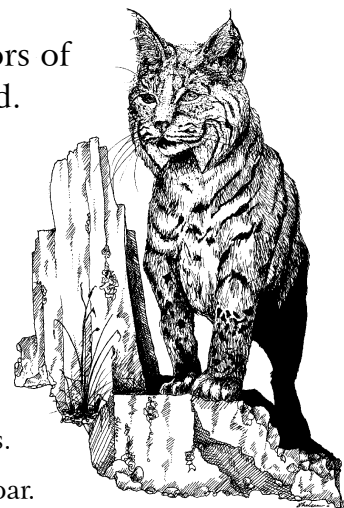
Out went the dinosaur and in came the cat! Scientists tell us ancestors of modern cats first appeared on Earth around the time dinosaurs disappeared. Cats have been roaming Earth for millions of years!

Today, there are many species of cats living all over the world. We can divide them into three groups to show some ways they are alike and different:

Big Cats: This group includes tigers, lions and leopards. These large cats have special voice boxes, allowing them to have a very big roar. But they cannot purr.

Little Cats: This group includes Utah's wild cats: bobcats, lynx and mountain lions. It also includes domestic cats! These cats have special voice boxes that allow them to purr. They cannot roar, but they can make other sounds, like growls, snarls, screams and hisses.

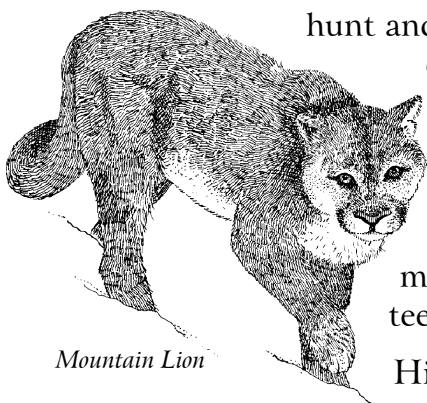
Cheetahs: The cheetah has its own group. It is like a big cat, but does not have a big roar. Also, all other cats can retract, or pull in, their claws. But the cheetah cannot!



Bobcat

Although there are many kinds of cats, all have some things in common. Read on!

Cats are amazing predators. This means they are meat-eaters, or carnivores, who hunt and capture their own food. Crafty skills and special body features place cats among the best in the world at stalking and catching prey.



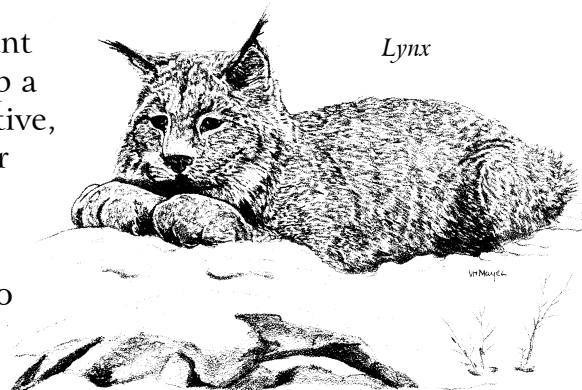
Mountain Lion

A cat's secret to a successful hunt is to get as close as possible to the prey without being noticed! This requires being sneaky. With padded paws and furry coat of camouflage, a lone cat will move quietly toward its prey, all the while hiding behind grasses, rocks or trees. At the right moment, the cat will pounce, using its sharp, curved claws and razor sharp teeth to grab the prey.

Highly developed senses help cats hunt. Exceptional eyesight allows them to see very well by day and by night. They can detect any movement in the area! A keen sense of smell tells them which animals have been there. Good listening skills and sensitive ears help them hear sounds that are far away. Plus, cats simply move their ears to hear sounds behind them! And finally, those fascinating whiskers are like sensitive finger-tips that help cats feel their way as they move through the dark.

Cats use these skills and special features in other important ways, too. Cats are curious and protective, and like to keep a watchful eye on their territory. But because they are secretive, they try to stay hidden at the same time. Cats use all their amazing abilities to survive!

Wild cats are extra careful to avoid humans. In fact, people rarely see them in the wild. But isn't it exciting to know we share the earth with such incredible animals?



Lynx

Turn the page to learn more about Utah's cool cats!

Hide and Seek!

♦ First, read all about Utah's three wild cats below, carefully looking for what they look like, where they live, and what they like to eat.

♦ Next, look at the landscape drawn on these pages. Hiding in the landscape are Utah's three secretive cats and their favorite prey. Look for all six!

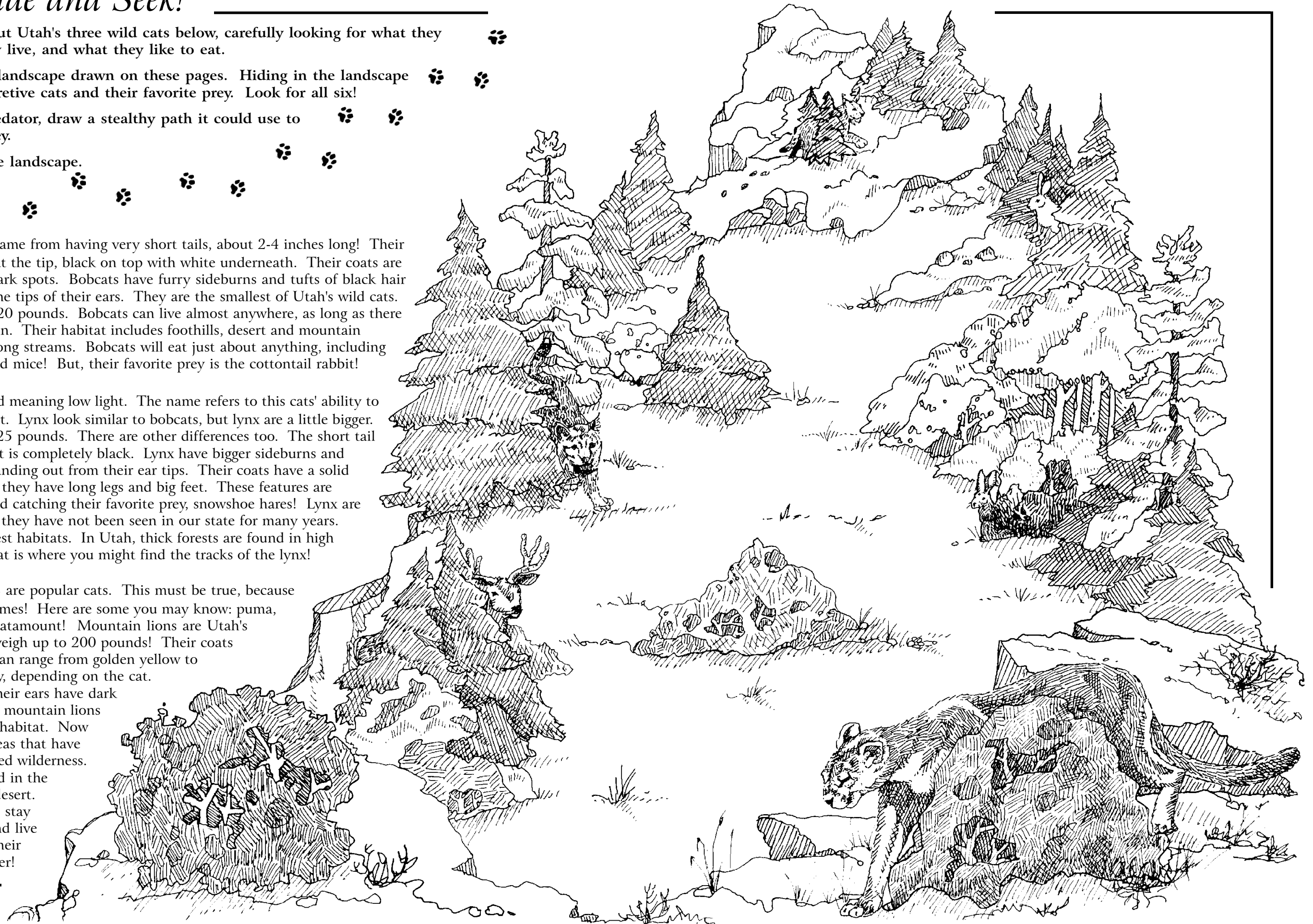
♦ Then, for each predator, draw a stealthy path it could use to stalk its favorite prey.

♦ And last, color the landscape.

Bobcats get their name from having very short tails, about 2-4 inches long! Their tails have two colors at the tip, black on top with white underneath. Their coats are reddish-brown with dark spots. Bobcats have furry sideburns and tufts of black hair that stand out from the tips of their ears. They are the smallest of Utah's wild cats. Adults weigh around 20 pounds. Bobcats can live almost anywhere, as long as there is good cover to hide in. Their habitat includes foothills, desert and mountain canyons, and areas along streams. Bobcats will eat just about anything, including birds, bats, snakes, and mice! But, their favorite prey is the cottontail rabbit!

Lynx is a Greek word meaning low light. The name refers to this cats' ability to hunt in very little light. Lynx look similar to bobcats, but lynx are a little bigger. Adults weigh around 25 pounds. There are other differences too. The short tail of a lynx has a tip that is completely black. Lynx have bigger sideburns and longer tufts of hair standing out from their ear tips. Their coats have a solid silver-gray color. And they have long legs and big feet. These features are perfect for stalking and catching their favorite prey, snowshoe hares! Lynx are rare in Utah. In fact, they have not been seen in our state for many years. They live in thick forest habitats. In Utah, thick forests are found in high mountain ranges. That is where you might find the tracks of the lynx!

Mountain Lions are popular cats. This must be true, because they have so many names! Here are some you may know: puma, cougar, panther and catamount! Mountain lions are Utah's biggest cats. Adults weigh up to 200 pounds! Their coats are a solid color, but can range from golden yellow to reddish-brown, or gray, depending on the cat. Their long tails and their ears have dark tips. Many years ago, mountain lions lived in every type of habitat. Now they live mostly in areas that have lots of open and unused wilderness. These places are found in the mountains and high desert. Mountain lions try to stay away from humans and live where they can find their favorite prey, mule deer!



For many Native American cultures, the passing of stories from one generation to the next has been an important part of their tribe's culture. Many of these legends were sacred spiritual stories which tried to explain the varied mysteries and tragedies of life. Since ancient Native Americans did not have televisions, story telling became a source of entertainment as well. Sometimes, legends were told to teach or to answer questions about nature. The following is one such legend as told by Jackalene Crow, a storyteller of the Cherokee Nation.

How The Bobcat Lost His Tail

At one time this cat had a long, thick, furry tail. He lived in a country in the north with the native people of Canada. He needed this long, furry tail because when winter came, it was so cold that the frost would nip his nose. He would take his tail and wrap it about his nose to keep it from freezing.

But there was a big cat that was kind of lazy and he didn't take care of his tail. His mother was after him all the time. You see, anything that long and furry had to be taken care of. It had to be combed and all the burrs had to be taken out of it. It really took a lot of work. But this big cat had other things to do and he just didn't take care of his tail. It got all matted and dirty.

One day when he went down to the river to get a drink, he flipped his tail out over the water and as he did so, a fish jumped up and grabbed his tail. He flung it up on the bank and ate it up quickly. "Wow, this is great" he said. "What a nice way to get dinner". And so, he went off for awhile and thought about it.

A little while later he came back, "I'm going to try that again". So, he flicked his tail out over the water, but no fish jumped up. So, he flicked it again and again and again. Finally a fish jumped up and grabbed it. He flung it up on the bank and he ate it up.

Well, that was a lot of work for this cat. Now he was tired, but he wanted to catch some more fish. He thought to himself, "I know what I'll do- I'll lay down here right along side the river and I'll take my tail and flick it out in the water and just kind of let it lay there, and I'll take a nap. While I'm asleep, all kinds of fish are going to come up and get ahold of my tail and when I wake up, I'll fling them all up on the bank. I'll have enough to feed everybody. Then they won't call me lazy anymore".

So, he took his tail and flicked it out over the water. He very carefully layed himself down on the bank and he went to sleep. But while he was asleep, a blizzard came and hit with a harsh cold. When he woke up, his nose was so cold and he tried to pull his tail up around his nose, but he couldn't pull it loose. It had turned so cold that the river had frozen right over his tail. He jerked on his tail and he jerked again and again. Finally he gave a big yank and his tail broke right off in the water.

And That Is How The Bobcat Lost His Tail.



Bobcat

Have some fun writing your own legends! Use your imagination and write a legend that answers a "how" or "why" question about one of Utah's wild cats. Some possible topics might include: **How the Cougar lost his roar; Why the Lynx has big feet; Why the Bobcat wears spots; How cats got retractable claws; or Why cats can see so well at night.** Be creative and enjoy this fun look at Utah's felines.